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*Circulated at  
USIB Meeting  
6 Apr 59*

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

14 April 1959

THE COMMUNIST THREAT TO IRAQ

1. We have reviewed SNIE 36.2-59 with an eye to how valid it looks in the light of events since it was approved by the USIB on 17 February. The main new relevant developments have been the abortive Mosul uprising in early March and the widened breach between Nasser on the one hand and Qassim and the Soviets on the other.

2. The main themes of the estimate were the very real and ominously effective Communist drive toward power in Iraq; the apparent disorganization and lack of effective leadership among the local nationalist opposition to Qassim--military and civilian; and the fact that Nasser viewed the situation as a serious challenge and one which he must fight even at the risk of losing Soviet support. We believe that recent developments have borne out the validity of all these judgments, and that the estimates in this paper remain largely applicable to the current situation.

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3. Within Iraq itself, the chief effect of the abortive Mosul rebellion has almost certainly been to help the Communist cause--by increasing Qassim's dependence upon his Communist backers, by adding to his pronounced distrust of anti-Communist nationalists, and by underscoring the deficiencies in leadership, initiative and organization which inhibit nationalist opposition elements. These trends are confirmed by current reports from Iraq of a systematic reshuffling or ousting of military and civilian personnel who lack enthusiasm for Qassim's policies and of more and more freedom allowed to Communist and pro-Communist elements, such as the recently armed "Popular Resistance Forces" which are actively harassing both Iraqi nationalists and Westerners. Iraq's decision in March to withdraw from the Baghdad Pact merely underscores these trends.

4. Similarly, Nasser's vigorous attacks on Qassim and his Soviet and Communist backers have almost certainly intensified Qassim's fears for the safety of his regime as against UAR - and Western-inspired conspiracies and pressures. This clearly increases Qassim's dependence on the USSR.

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5. In short, the situation in Iraq has continued to develop along the lines sketched in SNIE 36.2-59, and we estimate that the Communists are now in a position to assume control in Iraq whenever they consider it desirable. We believe that they are still reluctant to assert their power openly, but we can give no assurance how long this reluctance will persist.